DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 110 790 CE 004 603

TITLE	Recruiting 4-H Volunteer Leaders.
INSTITUTION	National Four-H Club Foundation, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Extension Service (DOA), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	73
NOTE	9p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Leaders; Extension Agents; *Guidelines; Leaders Guides; *Recruitment; *Volunteers; *Youth Clubs; Youth Leaders
IDENTIFIERS	*4 H Clubs

ABSTRACT

The guide is intended to assist 4-H Club extension workers in recruiting volunteer adult and youth leaders. It discusses: why volunteers serve (organizational identity, desire to serve, involvement of other family members, future opportunities and obligations, community status, self interest, and public opinion); how to recruit (person-to-person approach, committee approach, mass recruitment approach, and organizational approach); where to look for recruits (youth, the elderly, others); and what's expected of the volunteer (general and specific commitments). (JR)

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JUL 21 1975

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RECRUITING 4-H VOLUNTEER LEADERS

NATIONAL 4-H VOLUNTEER
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE REPORT 1973

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RECRUITING 4-H VOLUNTEER LEADERS

Effective recruiting of 4-H volunteer adult and youth leaders is an important and continuous process -- vital to the quantity and quality of the 4-H experience for both leader and member. Each year approximately 1/3 of these volunteer leaders are new to 4-H.

People of all ages from all walks of life find satisfaction in volunteer service. But you are competing with many other organizations in recruiting their time and talent. These volunteers offer the 4-H program an opportunity to expand its leadership roles.

It's up to you, the Extension worker, to be committed to manage a recruitment program. You need an understanding of volunteers and volunteerism, plus a willingness to experiment with new methods.

Some of these new methods include: employing paraprofessionals in recruiting; reimbursing the out-of-pocket expenses of low-income youth and adults; and cooperating with schools and colleges in providing audiences for students to practice leadership skills.

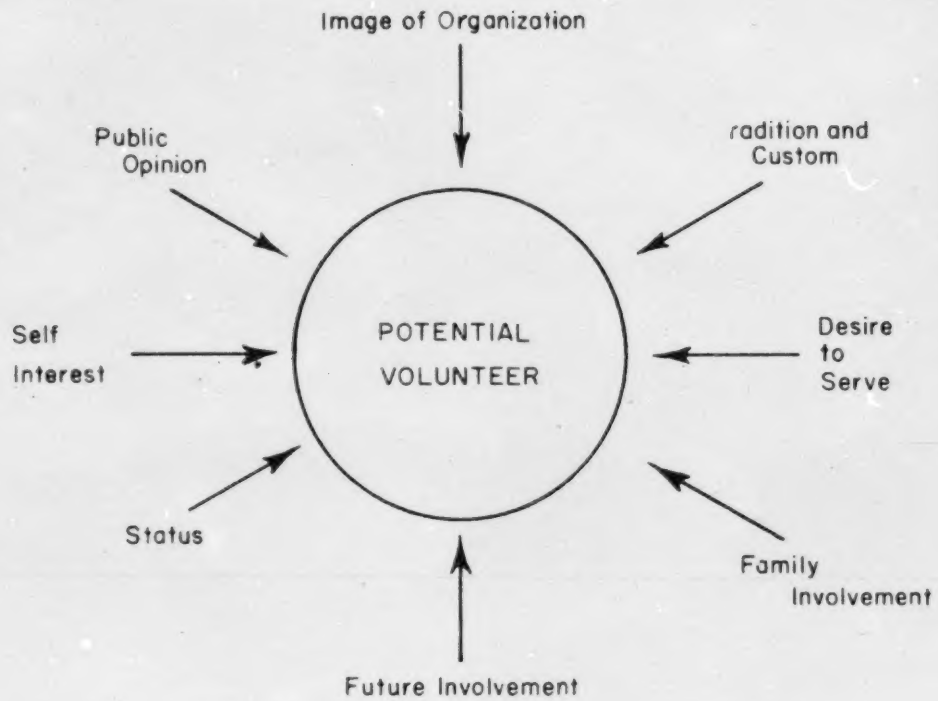
Extension workers, especially the county professional youth worker, have a responsibility in recruiting. Your attitude concerning the availability of volunteers; their value; and the delicate relationship of volunteer, paraprofessional and professional; are all key elements in successful recruiting.

Responsibility for recruiting local volunteer leaders belongs at the local level. Where a functioning community sponsoring committee exists, this task is fairly simple. Where no committee exists, the professional staff may first have to organize local leadership for 4-H support. In either case, you can help:

- local organizations identify "good" recruiters by determining their role

- the local organization and recruiter discover local leadership needs and how to approach prospective volunteers.

WHY VOLUNTEERS SERVE



If people feel it is your organization and not theirs, they will feel no obligation to volunteer. Let them know you are there to help them help themselves -- not to do their job for them.

Most people do have a desire to serve. But they want to know what's in it for them and how much it will cost. Cost may be money, time, or embarrassment. The public suspects that "nobody does anything for nothing."

If the people you are recruiting have family members involved in 4-H, they will be easier to reach. Try to enroll parents with 4-H members. It's easier to interest them when the child first joins. Have them bring their mother and father to the first meeting. Then tell the parents about the program and what they can do to help. Make them feel their contribution is important. This is often easier to do with the mothers than it is with the fathers. However, fathers will help if they feel needed.

The people you are recruiting will want to know what they are getting involved in -- what are the future opportunities and future obligations. Some will be challenged to know there are more opportunities if they succeed in their assigned task. Others will not volunteer if they feel the commitment is too great. Based on the person's confidence and past volunteer work, you must decide when to challenge and when to ease off.

Community status given 4-H leaders will often influence a person volunteering. If a person's supervisor is working as one of your volunteers, it will be much easier to recruit his subordinates. Likewise, when people holding high positions in the community volunteer, their status will be associated with your 4-H program.

Self interest is another technique we use in Extension to get people to volunteer. If a person is a talented gardener and you recognize this talent, he will be proud to show others how to grow plants. Make an interest inventory as you visit people. List who collects rocks, who paints, who builds things. Then when you need a leader for a specific job, visit that person, requesting his service.

Public opinion is also very important. If you have started working directly with youth, then the public will feel that this is your job. But, if you primarily recruit and train volunteer leaders to work with youth, they will identify recruiting as your job. We have examples of both in our 4-H program.

HOW TO RECRUIT

Very few volunteer leaders volunteer. They must be contacted and asked to serve. Studies of volunteer organizations indicate that the best source of potential leadership is from within the present ranks and friendship group of those participating. Dr. Ruth Ward in a doctoral project on "Securing Volunteers," found that in general recruiters agreed that to be successful they must have an interest in people and in finding the right person for a specific job. They must believe in the organization and its purposes and show this in the way they live. Recruiters were of the opinion that their sincerity, friendliness and enthusiasm are important in attracting others.

Here are four basic approaches to recruitment:

1. Individual-to-individual or person-to-person approach. This is recommended as the most fruitful method of recruiting. It is most effective when the recruiter is acquainted with the recruit, has seen him in action, and has deliberately selected him as the best qualified person for the job.

2. Group-to-individual or committee approach. This can be effective because more people are involved in the selection process. The fact that a group has approved the selection weighs heavily with the recruit, especially if its members are people he respects and holds in esteem. This method requires more time and more people. A group of children who want a club leader can dramatize their need very effectively, making it difficult for the prospect to refuse.

3. Individual-to-group or mass recruitment approach. This approach is used in areas where the agency has little or no existing activity or where many volunteers are needed. First, it is necessary to arouse interest in leadership and then to find which individuals are interested. Interest is stimulated by having a speaker, who may use films or other materials, tell a parents' meeting, civic club, or other group about the purpose of the organization and its program, and explain its needs for volunteers.

4. Group-to-group or organization approach. The letter of transfer when a member moves into a new area comes under this classification. The organization will be glad to learn of new, experienced personnel.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR RECRUITS?

Even though volunteers come from all age groups, two groups with the greatest volunteer potential are youth and the elderly.

Youth -- Increased numbers, commitment to service, lack of paid job opportunities, concern for human relations and a need to be part of the action make youth a major leadership resource. Junior leader and teen leader projects and college student volunteers indicate interest in this age group. Youth leadership at the high school and junior high level is also being utilized. The need to make leadership opportunities challenging, creative and exciting is important in capturing the imagination of youth.

Elderly -- Because of numbers, available time, skills and a need to be of service, this group also represents a tremendous leadership resource. Teams of young and elderly could provide a balance of enthusiasm and maturity meaningful to all involved. Many senior citizens' organizations encourage volunteer service.

Others -- In his book, The Volunteer Community, H. Naylor names the blue collar world and black women as the greatest untapped sources of volunteers.

Volunteer bureaus have shown that many fine people, unattached to any groups, can be attracted through mass media appeals if specific needs are described.

To find possible volunteers in low-income areas, recruiters are trying laundromats, bowling alleys, street corner clubs, Job Corps and Head Start centers and post offices. They also utilize supermarket bulletin boards, labor unions and the waiting rooms of public health and housing centers. Other people who can help you find volunteers are mail carriers, police officers, teachers, social workers. The important point is that most people know people who need only to be asked.

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF THE VOLUNTEER?

The first question a volunteer will ask is, "How much time is involved and what is expected of me?" Have job descriptions available to serve as guides. Flexibility should make it possible for 4-H to alter job descriptions to fit the time commitment and talents of the volunteer. Even people with small amounts of time can be utilized. Successful experiences in small efforts may lead to greater involvement from the volunteer.

The Ohio 4-H staff has used the following approach to illustrate how to break large leadership tasks into specific responsibilities:

Increase Your Batting Average - "Yes" Vs "No"

A. Break a big job into reasonable pieces.
Example:

Would you be a 4-H leader?

Vs

We are looking for two or three adults to work with a group of youth, would you help?

B. Be specific rather than general in asking for help.
Example:

Would you lead a 4-H Club?

Vs

We have a group of kids who are learning about bicycles. Would you help them learn if we provide the materials?

C. Ask for specific short-term commitments.
Example:

Would you lead a 4-H Bicycle Club?

Vs

The 4-H Bicycle Club ia having a meeting next week. Would you help them learn to change a bicycle chain?

D. Be complimentary, not apologetic in asking for help.
Example:

I know you're busy, but we can't find anybody to lead the bicycle club. Would you?

Vs

The kids in the 5th grade want to have a 4-H bicycle club and they asked if you could be their leader. Would you help?

(Note: The second answer is the better choice.)

The actual communication between recruiter and volunteer is a key part of the recruitment process. What is said and how it's said influences acceptance by the volunteer.

The Michigan Farm Bureau lists 10 steps for successful volunteer recruitment:

1. The first cardinal rule of recruiting is to be FRIENDLY and SINCERE.

2. A forthright recruiter always reveals the PURPOSE of a CALL or VISIT.

3. The WORTHINESS of the proposition must be proven before the prospect will take desired action.

4. A prospective volunteer needs to see some CHALLENGE in the task, if he is to undertake it.

5. How the proposition will BENEFIT him, his family, his community, his income, etc., is a key point in recruiting.

6. The prospective recruit needs to be assured that the task is ACHIEVABLE.

7. Before a recruit is fully committed, he should know WHAT is expected of him and WHEN.

8. Review the training and help that will be available.

9. When the facts are in, GET THE COMMITMENT.

10. As soon as the recruit has agreed to undertake the task, you should review his IMMEDIATE RESPONSIBILITIES.

11. The final step is to say THANK YOU and continue to give support.

Those responsible for recruitment might heed the following guidelines:

. Organize for action

. Remove stereotype

. Recruit for a task

. Let people work

. Be positive